

Central MRS Meeting Notes  
April 25, 2006  
Kannapolis,

Counties Present: Cabarrus, Catawba, Guilford, Mecklenburg, Person, Rowan, Union

Introduction

News from Raleigh

Practice Notes Survey

Family Centered Practice

Where are we?

Where are we going?

How do we get there?

Upcoming Meetings

News from Raleigh

- Patrick Betancourt from Franklin County will be taking Tony Troop's old position starting May 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- New policy consultant in Hope's old position. Rick Zeckman
- Responsible Individual List will be starting May 1<sup>st</sup>. When someone is substantiated for abuse or serious neglect they will have the option to appeal. Just got it through the Rules Committee so the letter will be coming out this week.
  - This will start May 1, but the automation will not be complete until June 15<sup>th</sup>. If you have someone to add to the responsible individual lists paper forms will have to be mailed to the Black Mountain Office. Please pay particular attention to the Dear County Director list.
  - Also, this means that data entry people will not see the fields on the screen that are on the form. Tell them not to freak out. Just enter the rest of the form.

Practice Notes Survey

- Asked folks to fill out a survey on about Practice Notes. Funded by the Division, comes out quarterly. Would like to get feedback about the notes with a survey and talking about impressions of the newsletter and how the newsletter can help implement MRS in their counties.

Family Centered Practice

How do we keep that front and center? A lot of counties say "Oh yeah, we are already family centered." In reality, you were probably as family centered as the old DSS system allowed you to be, but MRS allows a much deeper level of true family centered practice.

Even if you are excited about family centered practice to begin with, when you first start to get overworked it is easier to go back to the old way that you are comfortable with because you are rushed and just need to get the work done.

Over the next several months the Division wants to look at what kind of additional training they need to develop, particularly based on Family Centered Practice.

On a scale from 1-10 (1 is a cop, 10 is the best you could get) where are you?

Guilford

- Overall for the entire agency a 3 or a 4. The entire agency is not really family centered.

Rowan

- Overall probably a 4 or a 5. MRS assessment workers probably a 9.

Person

- About a 3, some workers are better up to a 5 or 6 depending on what training they have had.
- Talked about looking into family centered training for some other workers in the agency.

Catawba

- Overall a 3. Some programs 4 or 5.

Cabarrus

- 3. Some a little farther but just getting into it.

Mecklenburg

- WF workers, so can't really rate, but thinks that CPS is pretty family friendly.

Union

- Always thought they were family friendly. Have been doing Shared Parenting long before MRS.

What would they like to see that would make people feel that they were more family centered? How could you get to be a 6 or better? If you are watching a worker deal with a family, what should they be doing better. Where does it fall apart.

- Guilford, not just talking about Child Welfare, has to be an agency wide priority, from the time people walk in the door at reception.
- Everything is so rushed and pushed, and it makes it hard to think about it and be family friendly. If things could slow down some workers could be more family centered. This is why the MRS workers are doing better than the agency as a whole, because they have been trained, and they are allowed to slow down and take their time. The other workers are so

stressed at their high caseloads, and responding to their protocols about responses to different types of cases, that all they can think about is covering all the bases as quickly as they can. The easiest and quickest way to get the pressure off you is to process as quickly as they can, which does not lend itself to being family centered. One of the MRS assessment workers has said that family assessments are actually easier, because she can schedule appointments, meet everyone at one place instead of child at school, then parent at home, and the fact that the clients respond better, makes the stress go down as well.

- Mecklenburg WF and CPS go on home visits together, do joint home visits, and has helped them.

Anything that you are doing that is helping to promote family centered practice?

- When you get a call there is a problem, so it is hard to concentrate on strengths at first, because the whole reason you were called out there is that there is a problem.
- Guilford there is a support group for social workers. They meet once a month and discuss policies and issues, whatever they want and they report out to the management. The social workers have input into decisions. Example, they were concerned that customers had to take the bus to come to the building because they moved out of downtown, and there was no shelter for them to sit under in the rain or whatever, and the social workers wanted a shelter for clients to be able to wait under. That was accomplished after some of these meetings. They do ask that when the social workers present a problem or issue, they have to offer a solution as well. (which is what we do with families).
- Lunch and Learn, but it is preliminary. Trying to do them on a monthly basis.
- Look within the agency and how they respond to each other as well as clients and they (Guilford) have developed protocols based on this. Not only in how to deal with clients, but how to deal with other people in their agency.
- The safety assessment is too long. It is hard to engage a family to complete a 6 page document. (Holly said that the reason it has gotten longer is that people requested that the definitions be put on the form, we didn't add any questions. Do those definitions need to be on there??)
- Some of the mandated time frames for Child and Family teams lead to having meetings just for the sake of meetings and not productive. Feel that CFTs are an awesome tool, but sometimes they just have them because of a mandated time frame.

What training would you like to see?

- A lot of people that haven't been to the MRS family centered training don't really know what family centered practice is. You need to educate the whole agency, because the agency is a family. A lot of meetings, these,

and any other meetings, the supervisors go but the line workers don't get to come.

- WF workers can take Cornerstone 3. Holly read the upcoming dates for these trainings. (Remember that 3A and 3B are now combined.)
- Struggles to educate with community partners and having them understand that if the community partners are going to make allegations against a family to the DSS, they are now going to have to say it to the family as well.

How would you define family centered?

- Working with the family driving the service.
- Talking to them, not at them.

Case Management and Foster Care are you family centered there?

- Trying to work hard on Shared Parenting. See a real benefit to this. May go shopping together. Started emphasizing Shared Parenting in MAPP so they were expecting it. Not sure exactly how they got it across to the Foster Parents that have been doing it for some time.
- Have added a Shared Parenting expectation component to their agreement with Foster Parents.
- Court is a barrier because it is adversarial anyway. Generally if the Foster Parents go to court, they sit on the side with all the social workers, and all the biological parents are on the other side.
- People think you have to pick one of the other. You have to be the family's friend, or be hard on them and make them do stuff. There is a balance and have to figure it out. The Original 10 are meeting to discuss this on Friday.
- Have to be clear with the family that there are minimum expectations that they must do. You will help them, but they have to do it. If they don't do what they need to do, they have made their own decision and it is out of the CPS workers' hands. You just have to be clear with them from the beginning. You can be family centered and still take their kids, or take their check.

Bringing on your community Partners

- The Original 10 had a lot of lead time to bring in the community partners. How have the other counties involve their community.
- Rowan did not meet with them before they started, but they started meeting with them as they implement. Have something every month MRS March Madness, April Showers, May Flowers.
- Rowan has had really good success with the schools, which was surprising to them. Told them up front that abuse would not go through the family assessment. Talked about it with enthusiasm. Talked about the benefits the whole time, kept saying nothing about us without us. Played to the strengths of the knowledge that teachers and counselors have. School has actually called and asked will DSS take it as family

assessment. Talked to the guidance counselors who went back to talk to the teachers. The supervisor bought into the process, he participated in all 9 meetings that she did. She addresses all their concerns about safety and collaterals.

- Rowan meeting with GALs this week. They want to be a part of CFTs etc. Their county GALs are supportive of biological families.
- Cabarrus would like to work more closely with their schools and hospitals. They are not really familiar with MRS. They have not started family assessments yet though. Plan to start in the next couple of weeks. Had a lot of turnover that slowed them down.
- Holly has heard that if you talk too much about it before you start family assessments people kind of give you blank looks because they don't really get it and don't seem to care how you do it. But once you start doing family assessment they don't understand why you are not coming to the school and interview the kids, and they get interested in it and will be more interested.
- Continue, continue, continue. Some agencies will take longer to come on board. Don't present once and think that you are finished.
- Guilford met with the schools every fall to talk about it again. Get some on board and they will share with their co-workers. Think that the most difficult people to get on board are GALs.
- Cleveland contracted with someone to do family centered practice with their whole staff. They invited the school system folks to come to that and they did. It really made the school partners understand MRS and what family centered practice was all about. They saw the strengths and how it would benefit them.
- Rowan had a parent who was found in need of services, but she had such a good experience and the client was using the MRS terminology herself. The client came to the meeting where the supervisor was presenting to the school system and said that she had been involved with the CPS system before and if DSS had done things the way they had before it would not have helped her, but she thought the family assessment approach saved her life. She presented her story to the school system.
  - They have laminated the risk and strengths and needs assessment so that the client can look at while the social worker fills out her copy. They talk to the client about it while they are filling it out. Workers say this takes a long time, but it is worth it, because the families know exactly what the deal is.
- Great advocate for blended caseloads. The ones that do go to case management don't stay open as long, because it is a seamless transition. Once the family realize what their issues are they are ready to start working and they already have their worker.

### Other questions that came up:

- How is the new finding Services Provided, Protective Service no longer needed. How is this different from Services Recommended?
  - The history is that the first 10 were front loading services and finding No Services Needed, then they were told to make them Services Recommended, so Services Recommended went up. With the new finding, you have to have resolved the safety issue, and been able to close the case. With Services Recommended, you started services maybe late, and so you are recommending them to continue services. The new finding you can walk away. (This is not to say that the family can't choose to continue with services.) Example: Unsupervised children. During the assessment they get hooked up with daycare and the mom is following through. So, it was the new finding. If you have to follow up because without the services, the child won't be safe, it's In Need of Services, if you want to follow up just to be sure things are going ok, that is Services Recommended, or the new finding.
- Some confusion about the 5104, which we talked about.

### Upcoming Meetings/Trainings

#### Policy Training

5/3 Rowan Co

5/10 Edgecombe

5/16 Robeson

#### Monthly Meetings will be talking about System of Care

5/24 McDowell Community College

5/25 Alamance Co

5/26 Wilson Co (DSS)

No Western location for June yet.

6/28 Stanly Co.

6/29 Pitt Co. (Ag Center)

MRS Institute - August week of 21<sup>st</sup>. In Craven County (New Bern)